

March 15, 2004

TO: Chief School Administrators
FROM: Ellen Frede, Ph.D
Assistant to the Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood Education
RE: Early Launch to Learning Funding Opportunity

In the FY 2005 budget address, Governor McGreevey announced an exciting new vision for preschool in New Jersey. The Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI) will increase access to preschool for four year olds statewide.

The long term aim of ELLI is to provide access to high quality preschool for all four year olds in New Jersey by 2010. The interest to the taxpayers of New Jersey is clear: high-quality preschool results in savings to society over time and improves the quality of life, not only for the participants and their families, but for the communities as a whole. Currently, too many children are in low quality care, and parents have great difficulty finding and paying for good educational experiences for their young children.

The anticipated appropriation of \$15,000,000 for FY 2005 will fund approximately 4,000 low income children's participation, through a competitive award process. This funding is subject to passage of the State FY 2005 budget. The other 16,000 children will be paid for through braided funding using a combination of existing district funds (general fund or other funds), collaboration with Head Start and child care, and parent tuition. The classes will be comprised of children with disabilities, children from low-income families and children supported through other means. Districts already receiving Early Childhood Program Aid, with the exclusion of Abbott districts, are eligible for funding to increase from half day to full day programs.

Detailed information and instructions for the Early Launch to Learning Initiative are available on the Department of Education website at <http://www.nj.gov/njded/ece/>.

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